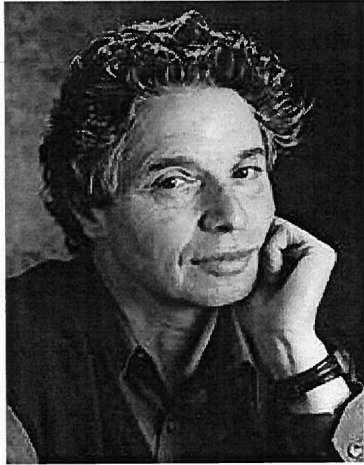


*Questions & Answers About Avi



WHEN WERE YOU BORN?

1937, in the city of New York. I was raised in Brooklyn.

WHERE DID YOU GET THAT NAME?

My twin sister gave it to me when we were both about a year old. And it stuck.

WHY DON'T YOU TELL YOUR REAL NAME?

The fact is, Avi is the only name I use.

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A KID?

Shy, not into sports, but someone who loved to read and play games of imagination.

WHAT DID YOU READ?

Picture books, then chapter books, comic books, and I listened to lots of kids' radio.

WERE YOU A GOOD STUDENT?

Not very. In elementary school I did well in science, but I was a poor writer. When I got to high school I failed all my courses. Then my folks put me in a small school which emphasized reading and writing. Even beyond that I needed special tutoring.

THEN WHY DID YOU EVEN WANT TO BECOME A WRITER?

Since writing was important to my family, friends, and school, it was important to me. I wanted to prove that I could write. But it took years before I had a book published.

WHEN DO YOU BECOME A WRITER?

I think you become a writer when you stop writing for yourself or your teachers and start thinking about readers. I made up my mind to do that when a high school senior.

DID YOU WRITE KID'S BOOKS RIGHT FROM THE START?

I began as a playwright. Only when I had kids of my own did I start to write for young people.

DOES YOUR FAMILY HELP YOU WRITE?

They help by supporting my efforts, not by giving me ideas, or suggesting changes.

IS WRITING HARD FOR YOU?

Yes. But then it's hard for every-one to write well. I have to re-write over and over again so that on average it takes me a year to write a book.

ISN'T THAT BORING?

If you do anything all the time it's nice to get away from it now and again. My hobby is photography.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?

Everybody has ideas. The vital question is, what do you do with them? My rock musician sons shape their ideas into music. My sister takes her ideas and fashions them into poems. My brother uses his ideas to help him understand science. I take my ideas and turn them into stories. Now, what do you think you'll do with your ideas?

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BOOK?

The next one.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WRITE?

I believe reading is the key to writing. The more you read, the better your writing can be.

ANYTHING ELSE?

Listen and watch the world around you. Try to understand why things happen. Don't be satisfied with answers others give you. Don't assume that because everyone believes a thing it is right or wrong. Reason things out for yourself. Work to get answers on your own. Understand why you believe things. Finally, write what you honestly feel then learn from the criticism that will always come your way.

